

Coins

New \$2 bills: Clear flaws, cloudy value

By Roger Boye

HERE ARE SOME questions from readers with, hopefully, some helpful answers.

Q — A few months ago I read that some of the new \$2 bills have flaws that make them worth more than face value. I asked some bank tellers about this, and they told me to check with a coin dealer. Could you possibly give me the information? — F.S., Chicago.

A — The Bureau of Engraving and Printing occasionally makes mistakes in producing United States currency, and although many of the "error bills" are discovered and destroyed at the bureau, a few manage to make it into circulation.

The more series 1976 \$2 bills that enter circulation, the more errors that will slowly turn up. So far, collectors have found \$2 bills with the serial numbers and seals printed upside down and with the reverse design overprinted on the front side, to cite just two examples.

It is difficult to estimate the collector value of such bills since the price depends on the condition of the bill, type and prominence of error, and, of course, collector demand.

Q — In my change sometime ago, I received a 1971-S cent. Since I had never seen one before, I am wondering if the coin has any value. — I.S., Valparaiso, Ind.

A — More than a half-billion 1971 cents were produced at the San Francisco Assay Office. The coins aren't seen too often in Chicago (or in Valparaiso), but are rather common in the West. A circulated specimen has no collector value.

Q — I recently bought a roll of dimes, and as I used the coins one by one, I came across a blank in the middle of the roll. Does it have any numismatic value? — M.C., Chicago.

A — If your blank came from a roll of uncirculated coins, you might have a metal disk the U. S. Mint was supposed to use to make a dime. Sometimes these disks (called planchets) accidentally get into the bags of coins that are shipped out of the mint, and then the disks could make it into rolls of uncirculated coins. Planchets for clad dimes sell for about \$5 each, according to one expert on coin errors.

However, if your blank came out of a roll of circulated dimes, it is most likely a worthless metal slug. You should take it to an expert for examination.

Q — About 20 years ago I acquired a \$1 bill with Hawaii printed on the front and back sides. I would appreciate any information about the bill. — S.G., Littleton, Colo.

A — Some series 1935-A silver certificate \$1 bills were stamped Hawaii for use in the Pacific war zones during World War II. They were identified that way so the government could make the bills worthless if the Japanese successfully invaded Hawaii or other U. S. Pacific territory.

The bills have a relatively small collector value (they sell for about \$3 in fine condition), but are an interesting conversation piece.

Q — I need to take some pictures of coins and dollar bills for a school photography project. My teacher says she thinks that there are rules about making pictures of money, but she isn't sure. Can you tell me what the law says? — A.F., Niles.

A — Coins can be photographed without restriction. U. S. currency must be photographed in black and white, either more than one and a half times, or less than three-fourths of the actual size. It is also illegal to make copies of currency on a photo-copying machine. The rules are supposed to protect currency against counterfeiting.

Q — My husband has about 35 buffalo nickels, but the dates are gone. Should we keep saving them? — B.T., Chicago.

A — The date on the buffalo nickel (made from 1913 to 1938) was one of the highest features on the coin, and wore away rather quickly. There are acids available that will "restore" the date by eating at the metal. However, the acids leave dark smudges and the so-called "restored date buffalo nickels" are not considered a collector's item.

Thus, buffalo nickels without a date have very little, if any, collector value.